BABY FARMING AND NOVEL WRITING

COMBINED BY "MODERN DICKENS."

PETT RIDGE.

IN PETT RIDGE'S HOME FOR LITTLE SICK BABIES.

BABY farming and novel writing are not usually associated, but one of England's most popular novelists has gone into business as the infants' friend, and he is far more proud of the success of his baby farm than he is of the popularity of his books. He is Pett Ridge, one of England's most popular writers. He has been called the "Modern Dickens," and there is some justice in the title, for no one since Dickens has portrayed so sympathetically and understandingly the English lower classes. His East End types are almost classics, and the fact that he always sees and makes his reader see the humor of his characters and situations does not prevent him from seeing and feeling the pathos.

It was this quality of sympathy which induced Pett Ridge to become a baby farmer. His favorite amusement is rambling about the East End of London. At first he began to ramble in search of types, but he soon began to ramble among the poor because he loved them and sympathized with them, and he soon began to realize the tragedy of poverty which is being played day after day in hundreds of mean streets. Above all, the plight of the children appealed to him. He saw the little babies suffering and dying from starvation and malnutrition. Sheer poverty in most cases was responsible, and in some cases the ignorance of the mothers, whose only training for motherhood was in the streets or the factories, and the worst of it all was that there was no hospital where such cases could be treated. Starving babies are not hospital cases, and the diseases incident to continued starvation and malnutrition usually come too late to enable the hospital to do them any good.

So Pett Ridge started his baby farm. It is called the "Home for Little Sick Babies," and it is situated on the upper floors of a house in Harman street—a mean street of Hoxton, one of the poorest districts in East London. The house itself is one of those which was once the home of a respectable middle-class family, a class that has long deserted Hoxton, and a little paint and much soap and water soon made it cheerful and habitable. On the ground floor is the Medical Mission of the Good Shepherd where the poor mothers bring their babies for free medical advice, and if the case is suitable for the home and there is a vacant cot, the doctor sends it upstairs.

Pett Ridge earned the funds for the equipment of the home, and enough to run it for a year by a special lecturing tour which he undertook, and since the home was opened last February a few of his friends have assisted by endowing cots, of which there are now a dozen in the home, and they are always full. Some of the babies stay only three weeks—the minimum period—but some stay much longer. One baby boy was left by a careless mother to the tender mercies of a gin-drinking old grandmother, and when he entered the home the doctor declared that he would not live through the night. Georgie, the baby, found the home good, however, and changed his mind, and is now a fine, fat, healthy child.

It is heart-rending to walk through the wards. There are a dozen little pink draped cots arranged round a couple of cheerful rooms, and each one contains a very caricature of babyhood. Weazened old faces and hands so tiny and fragile that one is almost afraid to touch them are the rule. A rosy baby is a distinct surprise. But when the babies have been a few weeks in the home there is a wonderful change. Good pure milk and plenty of it is almost the only medicine and its effect is amazing. Babies which looked like centenarians when they entered go out looking like what they really are, normal, healthy infants.

Although the home is on safe, financial ground for a year, its future is not assured. Pett Ridge is not a rich man, and he cannot afford to maintain it alone, and at any rate it ought to have accommodation for ten times as many babies as it can receive now. Some of his friends have helped. There is a cot called after Somerset Maugham, the playwright, who has endowed it, another known as the "Alfred Sutro cot," and a third in the name of E. F. Benson, the novelist. A fourth cot was endowed by some of the friends of the late G. W. Stevens, the war correspondent, and bears his name. It costs $70 to endow a cot and support it for a year.

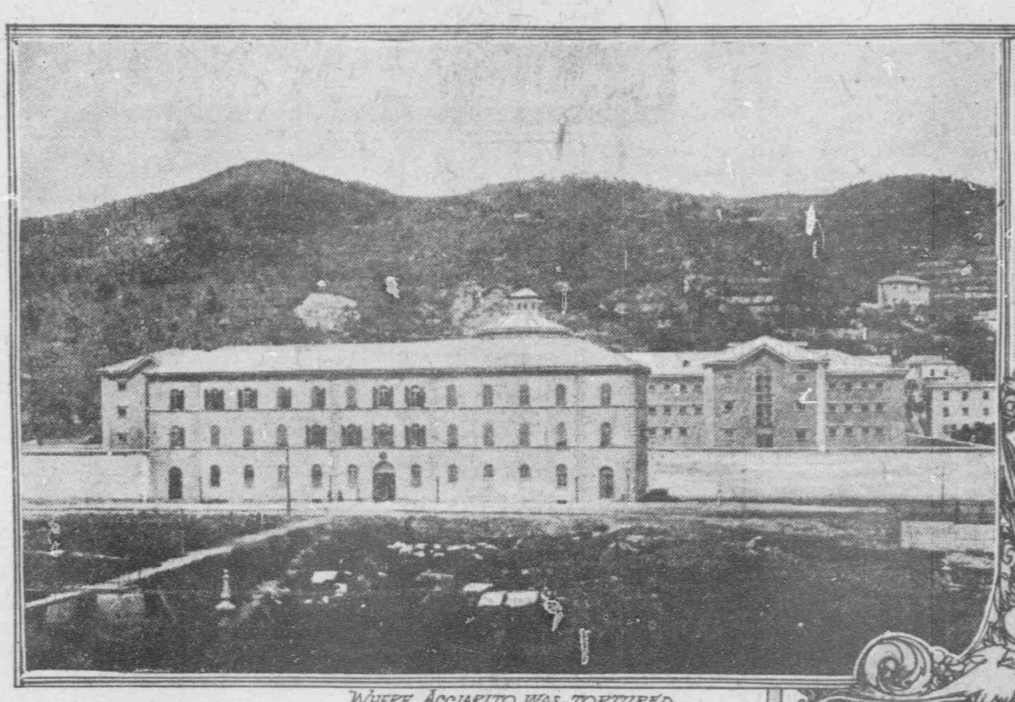
Pett Ridge is characteristically modest about his work. He prefers to give all the credit to Dr. Simpson, and the ladies who were running the mission of the Good Shepherd before he conceived the idea of adding the home to its activities. In fact, modesty is one of Pett Ridge's most distinguishing characteristics. He refuses to talk about himself and when asked to do so he replies by telling funny stories, for he is one of those rare humorists whose conversation is as funny as his books. His rather short, stout figure, always in a blue serge suit, and a blue tie with white spots, is a familiar one in many an alley in the East End, where even the police do not care to go, and he has never met with any harm, for even the most hardened of the residents of these places realize that he is their friend.

Although he has such an encyclopaedic knowledge of London, Pett Ridge is not a cockney born. He was born near Canterbury, and did not come to London until he was more than twenty years old. He began life as a clerk in a railway office and began to write for amusement. Editors soon found him out and now his work has a vogue which is surpassed by that of few English writers.

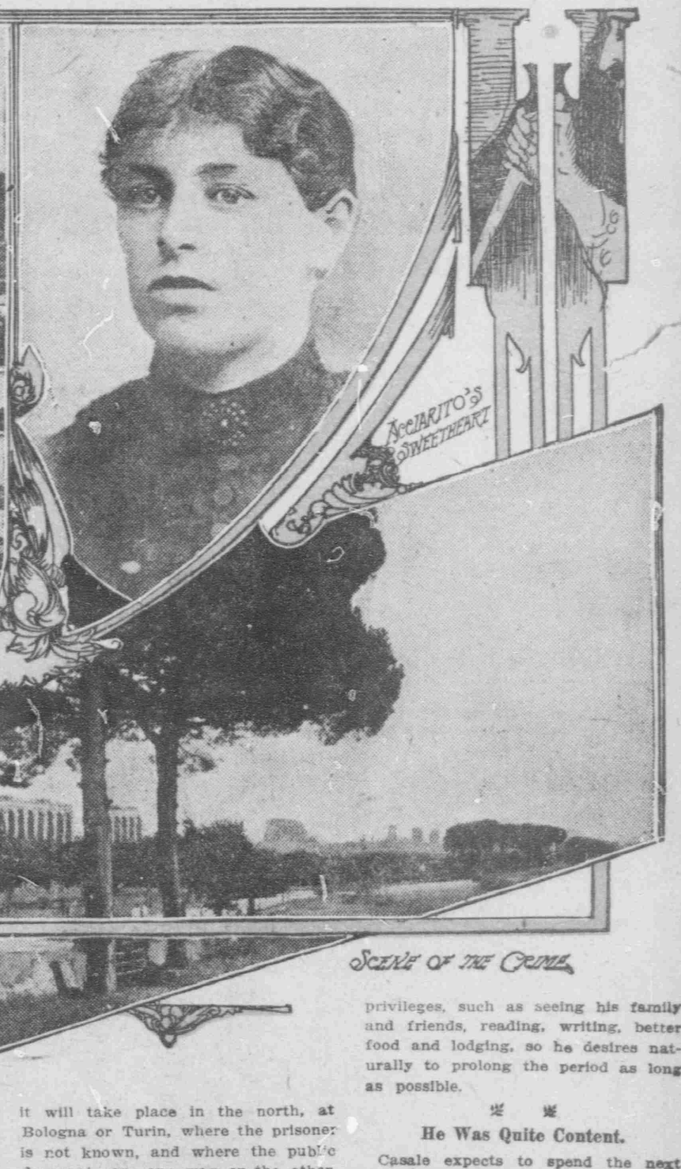
A cross man may be worth at least a dollar a day more if he would become good-natured.—Atchison Globe.

PRISONER TORTURED TEN YEARS

TO FORCE CONFESSION AND BETRAYAL OF ACCOMPLICES



WHERE ACCIARITO WAS TORTURED



SCENE OF THE CRIME.

WIDE attention is being attracted by the trial of Commendator Canevelli, director of the prisons of the kingdom, and Commendator Doria, his second in command, because of the high positions of the accused, and the object-lesson which it presents for those who are agitating for prompter justice. The two officials are being indicted for moral cruelties to a prisoner with the object of inducing him to betray his accomplices. The trial has already had two distinct and beneficial effects—that of further opening the eyes of Italians to the need of the reform of prison methods, and also to the scandalous delays in bringing accused persons, whether innocent or guilty, to trial.

The latter seems to be a characteristic of "justice" peculiarly Italian, as there is scarcely another country where a prisoner can languish for years in prison on mere suspicion.

Who has not heard of Acciarito, the would-be murderer of King Humbert? In the minds of most people he is such ancient history that he is almost forgotten, but the trial now going on has to do with his imprisonment, although his attempt on the life of King Humbert took place ten years ago, his escaped victim has been dead eight years, and Acciarito himself is languishing in a cell where ten years of solitary confinement has made deep inroads on his intelligence, and he is little better than an idiot.

How They Got Confession.

It seems that Commendator Doria, with the approval of Commendator Canevelli and some others, finding that Acciarito refused to acknowledge that he had accomplices, had one of the prison guards pretend to be a prisoner, and from the cell adjoining, by means of knocks on the wall, informed Acciarito that his mistress had had a son, and that they were dying of hunger. To support this monstrous and untrue story, letters were sent to him, purporting to be from the woman, with the same story. Acciarito's love for her was the best element in him, and in his agony at her supposed condition he at once gave way and supplied the names of several men as his accomplices. Later, however, he retracted his confession and nothing could be proved against them.

Public indignation was at white heat when the facts became public, and socialism and even anarchism made enormous strides. Notwithstanding this, it has taken ten years to bring these officials to justice. After all this time the public cares little on whom the responsibility lies; what they demand is that no such thing shall happen again, and that the whole prison system shall be changed. And just here lies the point of defense of those who approve a somewhat lengthy delay between the arrest of a person for a serious crime, and his trial. They argue that if he is tried at once, passions are aroused, that the jurors and even the judge cannot argue serenely, and that justice is more apt to go astray.

No Such Thing as Bail.

This keeping prisoners for years before trying them is doubly cruel in Italy, for the reason that there is no such thing as bail for criminal offenses. If they can afford it, alleviations in foods and comforts are allowed from outside. If they are poor, so much the worse for them. Thus, an innocent man's affairs may go to absolute ruin, and his wife and family be cast upon the street and public charity, yet he has no redress. This is the reason that both innocent and guilty at once take to cover on the least hint of danger. To be taken is fatal; if they can hide for a while, their innocence may be proved while they are at liberty.

Another ancient crime just now judged and concluded, and which illustrates this point, is that of the murder of Baron Saporito, brother of the well-known Sicilian deputy, who has been the head of so many parliamentary commissions to inquire into the Camorra and doubtful doings in the South. Deputy Saporito was the chief cause of bringing former Minister Nasi to trial, and has always believed that the latter had a moral influence in the murder of his brother. The latter was murdered seven and a half years ago, so that the accused men, now proved to be innocent, have been seven years in prison turning, in that time, from comparatively young men into middle-aged ones. There is no way of regaining or revenging those lost precious years.

Still Awaiting Trial.

The now famous Filippo Cifariello trial exhibited Italian justice in a new light, while retaining the features of the old. While three years have passed since this Neapolitan sculptor murdered his wife in a fit of jealousy, he is yet unjudged for the prime reason that while a trial was instituted this spring, it was considered that the jurors were altogether too sympathetic with the prisoner, the judge was not above suspicion, and the public not only made no secret of its opinion, but frequently took a hand in the proceedings. At last even this accommodating judge's patience found its limit, and the trial has been postponed, perhaps for years, anyway for months, and when it comes on again it will take place in the north, at Bologna or Turin, where the prisoner is not known, and where the public does not care one way or the other. The jurors were furious at this, calling it a "miscarriage of justice." Incidentally, they objected to being deprived of what was really to them a scene "as good as a play," in which they had the proud satisfaction of being prominent actors. "It is useless to change! Go where you will all over Italy, Cifariello will not find a jury which will not acquit him with its eyes shut," one enraged juror declared.

A characteristic case shows another phase of Italian law—that is, that even the confessed guilt of a prisoner does not hurry his trial. A certain Casale murdered an elderly man of good means, in 1895, in Perugia, and, when arrested shortly after, confessed his guilt. Notwithstanding that he has just been placed on trial. Of course, in such a case the lawyers for the defense seek every excuse to put off the trial. Their client is sure to be given long years of prison, but the time spent in prison before the trial is deducted from the sentence. Before trial, however, he is allowed certain privileges, such as seeing his family and friends, reading, writing, better food and lodging, so he desires naturally to prolong the period as long as possible.

He Was Quite Content.

Casale expects to spend the next thirty years at least in prison, and now that his trial has finally come, it will probably prove a not unwelcome break in the monotony of his days. This same Casale has lately passed his leisure in prison writing a play which was reported to have been accepted by Eleanora Duse. This was later discovered to be mere invention, and the confessed murderer is now writing his prison experiences.

Thus, the only persons who gain by the extraordinary dilatoriness of the Italian law are the assured criminals, and it bears hardest of all on the innocent. Public opinion in the peninsular is perfectly unanimous in demanding that there should be a thorough overhauling of the procedure of the law. The law itself is of the highest order, and the judges and responsible authorities in their great majority are animated only by an honest desire to see it carried out, but the jurors cannot be depended upon, and the public is often carried away, so that there is always delay, and often real miscarriage of justice.

This Family *has owned a Big Circus for 3 generations and famed the name* Of Robinson

A MARRIAGE and a dispute over the possession of $250,000, have just brought into the spotlight a remarkable Cincinnati family. For "Gov." John Robinson, with the honeymoon of his second romantic marriage scarcely over, has been sued for an accounting by the three children of his first marriage.

Back in the 30's dates the beginning of the first "John Robinson," circus man. John Robinson I, head of the present family, came to Cincinnati in 1830. He had been a blacksmith in Utica, N. Y., and had gotten together a little money. In 1824 he started the first of the famous circuses. Then he went to Cincinnati and located at the corner of Seventh and College streets, where, in later years, stood the old "Robinson homestead," birthplace of John Robinson II, and John Robinson III, and the heirs now suing with the last named for an accounting.

All the Robinsons have been a determined people. To perpetuate the name "John Robinson" was the ambition of John, the first, and, equal with this desire in his heart, was the builder up of what he hoped would be the greatest circus on earth.

His son, before the older Robinson's death, had taken hold. Thereupon the term of John Robinson II, how called the "governor," had begun. The ideas of the founder of the family upon importance and fame are shown forth in his monument in Spring Grove. It is one of the biggest and costliest monuments in that beautiful burial ground, and cost $40,000. That monument and his circus business John Robinson I desired to be his lasting memorial in this world. John II has the same ideas of the circus and the perpetuation of the name "John Robinson" firmly implanted in him. In early life he met the beautiful Caroline Heyward while his circus showed in South Carolina. Her grandfather was one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, and she came of an old family so wedded to the South that they on one occasion gave their silverware to be molded into bullets in a skirmish between the Southern and Northern troops near their farm. When Miss Caroline went for a visit to New York, John Robinson II was married to her there in an Episcopal church situated at the corner of Eleventh street and Broadway. She aided her husband in building up the circus. In the early days she aided in making the costumes. She was essentially a woman of domestic tastes. In 1886 John Robinson II bought the Biggs farm in Terrace Park, and the circus later wintered at that place, as it has done until today. Under John Robinson II the business prospered and attained to the grandeur of the dreams of the founder of the family.

John Robinson 2d lost his first wife in 1887. Her three surviving children—John Robinson 3d, Mrs. Pearl Larkin, and Mrs. Caddie Stevens—are the parties to the suit which has brought the family into wide notice just now. John Robinson 3d began to aid his father in the circus business when seventeen years of age. Together the father and son mapped out the policy of the show. The marriages of all three of the children were romantic.

John Robinson 3d was married to Leonora Smith, a daughter of Amor Smith, former mayor of Cincinnati and now surveyor of customs at this port, and from this male line comes the fourth of the line, little John Robinson 4th. Miss Pearl married a bareback rider at Mitchell, Ind.

Miss Caddie married Attorney Horace Stevens.

In memory of his dead wife and a daughter, Kate, who died unmarried, "Governor" Robinson built in Terrace Park a beautiful stone church. For eleven years the various marriages of his children added the only romance to the story of John Robinson 2d.

About a year and a half ago there came into the family, to nurse John Robinson 2d, a Miss Mary Maud Logan. Again the heart of the circus magnate warmed to thoughts of love, and the upshot, at Clarksville, Tenn., was his wedding to Miss Logan. This wedding revealed in a way another interest in John Robinson 2d's life, for a Mt. Auburn woman went to Clarksville. She was for years a costumer for the show, and she claimed that she entertained for John Robinson 2d a very great regard. She was not allowed to see John Robinson 2d, however, but returned to her home in Cincinnati. She has retained attorneys. John Robinson 2d has large holdings in the United States Playing Card Company, and United States Printing Company. He owns the John Robinson Circus and the Robinson's Opera House, and has valuable real estate holdings about Cincinnati, outside of his Terrace Park farm. He is sixty-six years of age.